

"CIVILIZED"—And Still Beheading Women!

The Barbarous and Shocking Death by the Axe, Which Recalls the Darkest Days of Mediaeval Torture, and Which Has Just Been Suffered by Two Women in Modern Germany

Ratibor, Germany, February 11, 1914.

AN event that has just occurred in this old Prussian town will remind the civilized world that the brutal mediaeval method of execution by the axe is still practised in Germany.

Still more startling is the fact that this mediaeval punishment is inflicted upon women.

Two young women, Josepha Kubacka and Franziska Zimmer, have been beheaded in the prison here. Josepha Kubacka was condemned to death for the murder of her husband. She alleged that he ill-treated her brutally. She was convicted of putting poison in his coffee.

The other woman, Franziska Zimmer, was convicted of murdering her stepmother. She also employed poison in committing her crime. In her defense it was stated that the older woman had abused her and kept her without food.

Both women were condemned to death after long trials, in which their lawyers pointed out eloquently that the capital punishment of women had been practically abolished in most civilized countries and set forth all the philosophical and scientific arguments in favor of such a course.

The execution was fixed to take place between sunset of one day and sunrise of the next. The scene was the hall of the ancient baronial castle which now serves as the jail of Ratibor. The executioner was a local butcher, chosen for his dreadful task because of the skill acquired in chopping up animal bodies with his axe and cleaver in his daily occupation.

The executioner came to the castle at four o'clock in the morning, when it was still pitch-dark. The hour was chosen to prevent a crowd from gathering about the prison. In accordance with official regulations the executioner wore full evening dress. He carried the implement of his dreadful office in a long black bag. It is a peculiarly shaped axe, having a very long, heavy blade—its length is twelve inches. It is very heavy, so that the executioner may deal an irresistible blow with it, and, to add to its weight as it falls, a quantity of quicksilver runs through the hollow handle. It is carefully designed to enable the user to make an accurate stroke with it.

A block of solid oak was placed in the center of the castle hall. Before it was arranged a black cushion, on which the condemned would kneel. The top of the block was higher on the side nearer the cushion, so that it would throw the neck resting upon it into prominence.

The executioner covered his face with a black mask before the prisoners were brought into his presence. Josepha Kubacka was the first brought from her cell. She struggled fearfully, and it required the efforts of four stalwart keepers to carry her to the block.

The keepers had offered her brandy, in accordance with custom, expecting that this would deaden her senses to the ordeal before her, but she refused this solace. All the way she fought the keepers like a tigress, although her hands were tied behind her back. A clergyman accompanied her, holding a crucifix before her and urging her to repent and pray for forgiveness. She paid no heed to him, but kept shrieking: "I don't want to die. If I hadn't killed him, he would have killed me."

When the keepers had carried her to the block, it was necessary to throw her head over it and hold her in that position. Her long, ruddy hair was drawn forward and her round full neck then lay exposed and free from obstructions on the raised part of the block.

The executioner took no part until the neck was in the position he desired. Then he raised his axe deliberately. It fell quickly, the stroke ending with a dull crunching sound. The remains were removed into an adjoining room. The sawdust which had been liberally scattered round the block was swept up and renewed. All was in readiness for the next execution.

The second woman, Franziska Zimmer, behaved very differently from the first. Doubtless her terrors had been increased by hearing the other's shrieks. When she was brought about she was nearly lifeless, and the keepers were obliged to carry her limp body to the block. In reply to the ministrations of the clergyman, she moved her lips faintly.

The keepers placed her limp form on the block and the executioner performed his task.

Those who were invited to witness the execution, including newspaper correspondents, doctors and a number of prominent citizens, agreed that whatever might be said against beheading, it was certainly the most terrifying form of the death penalty that could be imagined.

To the foreign witnesses the scene was a most astonishing and horrifying re-enactment of the historic tragedies of the Tower of London, about which they had read.

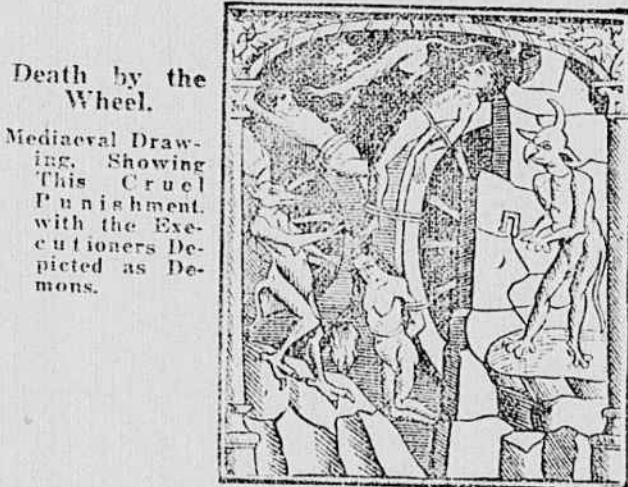
It made them think of the execution of Henry VIII's beautiful young Queen Anne Boleyn, dragged to the block at the command of the jealous and fickle husband. They thought what it must have meant to see that neck, said to be the most beautiful in England, that neck filled with the life-blood of the most attractive beauty of the court, severed by the executioner's axe.

They thought of the venerable Countess of Salisbury, upward of eighty years old, who fought with the executioner's assistants until they forced her head on the block and the headsman hacked it off. They thought of poor Lady Jane Grey, beheaded in her sixteenth year; of Mary, Queen of Scots, condemned to the block by her own cousin and fellow Queen.

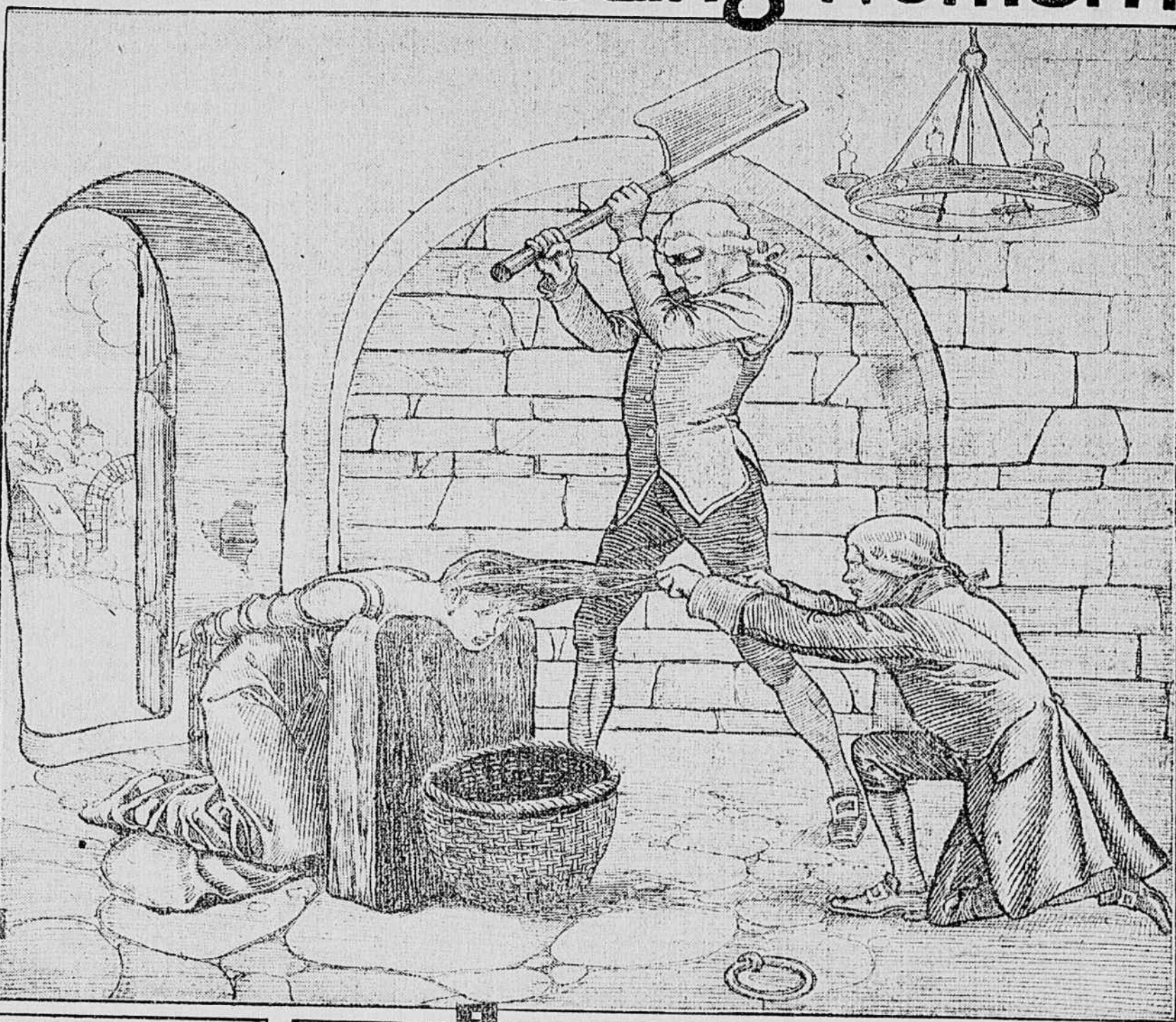
They thought of Joan of Arc, of the Marquise de Brin-

Death by the Wheel.

Mediaeval Drawing, Showing This Cruel Punishment, with the Executioners Depicted as Demons.



The Water Torture as Inflicted on a French Woman in Ancient Times. An Old French Picture of the Torture of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, Who Was Later Beheaded for Murder.



The Death by the Axe, Still Practised in Modern Germany. A Drawing of an Old Print, Showing a Woman's Execution in Ratibor, Germany, in 1792. The Scene Was Recently Repeated Just as Shown Here, When Two Murderesses Were Beheaded in the Same Old Prison.

killers, most terrible of poisoners; of Queen Marie Antoinette, and of the countless other women, good and bad, who had been done to death, often with horrible tortures, in other days.

Executions of women have occurred more frequently in Germany than in any other civilized country in recent years.

An execution which attracted much attention was that of Grete Beier, at Freiberg, in Saxony, in 1909. She was a very handsome and accomplished young woman and the daughter of the Mayor of Freiberg. She murdered her fiancé with remarkable heartlessness and deliberation.

The infliction of the death penalty upon a woman is evidently becoming a rare occurrence in the civilized world and there are many reformers who say that it should be stopped even before the total abolition of capital punishment. In the United States, the sentencing of a woman to death, which rarely happens as often as once in a year, always arouses a storm of protest from humanitarians, but it would be rash to say that the States are soon to relieve women from the supreme penalty altogether.

In France no woman is ever sent to the guillotine, although the law permits it. Italy follows the same example. In Russia capital punishment, except under martial law, has been abolished.

In England women are still subject to the death penalty and one was executed last year, but the courts tend to show more leniency toward the weaker sex.

In the half-civilized countries of the East women are punished more severely for their offences than men. These people are still living in the Middle Ages. For instance, in Persia recently a woman was stoned to death for bigamy, an act which in a man would have been no crime.

In the year 1912 there was no execution of a woman in any civilized country of Europe or America, and this led humanitarians to expect that the practice would cease altogether, but they were mistaken.

Those who oppose the infliction of capital punishment on women base their position generally on the gentler and weaker constitution of the fair sex and the fact that man stands in the attitude of a protector toward women. We do not inflict the death penalty upon little children, and for the same reason we should not inflict it on women. It is also urged that it is atrocious to execute a being who is or may become a mother.

The records prove that woman is less frequently a criminal than man, but on the other hand some women commit crimes which for cold-blooded cruelty cannot be surpassed. Indeed, there seems ground for arguing that more exceptionally cruel murders are committed by women than by men.

Havelock Ellis, an excellent English authority on fundamental sex characteristics, has explained the differences in the criminality of men and women very interestingly:

"The forms of criminality into which women most easily fall are the subtlest (like poisoning), and also the more domestic forms. Murders, assaults, burglaries, thefts, commercial crimes—as well as the so-called political crimes—are comparatively rare among women. In Italy, for 100 men who commit any one of these offenses the proportion of women is from six to below one."

"Poisoning, on the other hand, is a characteristically feminine criminal method. In Greek days, Euripides makes Medea say that poison is the form of murder in which women excel, and they have retained that prominence ever since. In France this proportion is about six women to three or four men, so that about two-thirds of detected cases of poisoning are by women. In Italy, for every 100 men found guilty of poisoning there are 123 women."

"Infanticide is the crime in which women stand out in greatest contrast to men; in Italy, for example, for every 100 men guilty of infanticide, there are 47 women."

"Women, as Quetelet long since remarked, are domestic criminals; this is simply because the home occupies so large a field in their life generally; even against their own children, and upon the infantile, women commit crimes somewhat more frequently than the fathers. This has been the experience of the Society for the Protection of Children, which in a year obtained convictions against 347 fathers and 256 mothers. The crimes of women are usually more marked by cruelty than those of men."

Teaching the Armless and Legless to Earn a Living

BECAUSE a man has only one leg is no reason why he may not work with his hands as well as men whose lower limbs are intact.

But legless men have difficulty in finding employment, no matter how expert they may be with their hands. Employers are averse to having cripples about their shops.

The result is that these unfortunates frequently become objects of public charity, although possessing both the capacity and the desire to earn their livelihoods by their own efforts.

To remedy this situation is one of the objects of the unique institution known as the Trade School of the Hospital of Home, which first teaches crippled and disabled men a trade and then uses its influence to secure work for them.

The institution occupies an old-time twenty-room house in Franz Siedel Park, at Mott Avenue and One Hundred and Fifty-ninth Street, just below the opening of the Concourse, New York City, and what is perhaps as unusual in institutions of this kind as the work itself is the fact that this one is supporting students, and not funds. The latter are supplied by Mr. Artemus Ward, who founded the school, and the former are recruited from the hospitals.

The old-time parlor of this building is full of strange machines which look like instruments of torture, but are, in fact, gentle mechanical contrivances to straighten or strengthen the hands, arms or legs, where injuries are still capable of modification.

"These machines are known as mechanotherapy machines," explained Dr. Charles H. Jaeger, late of

the German Hospital, director of the work. "For each arm, leg or trunk movement there is an apparatus, which by means of its adjustment, adapts to the anatomical conditions, allows of the active exercise of a certain group of muscles."

"The resistance to be overcome is accurately known and can be in-

creased or diminished as occasion requires. In all these machines the part to be exercised is so adjusted that the moving joint is in exact line with the axis of the machine. This is important, as it insures the correct physiological action of the muscles."

Among the trades which the cripples are taught are cabinet-making, metal beating, engraving, drawing, basket and wicker furniture making and leaded glasswork.

Because of the infirmities of the workers, special tools and machines have been devised to enable them to turn out a product equal to that of their more fortunate competitors.

In one of the pictures on this page men who have lost an arm are shown

working on glass mosaic work. Whereas a fully equipped workman would hold a piece of glass in one hand and break it with the other, special clamps operated by foot are used by these cripples to take the place of their missing arms.

Some of them still have their arms, but the use of them is restricted through paralysis or other defects. These students are taught how to overcome their handicaps by employing the special devices constructed to help them.

Their work is naturally slow, but the finished product is equal to that turned out by normal workmen.

Men with weak or missing legs but strong arms and hands rapidly become experts at roadwork. In this class orders are taken for repair work outside of the school.

The directors of this school realize that besides teaching these unfortunates a trade it is essential to inspire them with hope. Held back by their physical limitations—hopeless because helpless—it is natural that the cripple should drift into an abnormal mental condition unless constantly encouraged. The growth of cheerfulness among the students at this school is one of the most gratifying and promising achievements of the institution.

The intention is to give willing, healthy young men who are handicapped by some deformity an opportunity to learn a trade, and to give this in assistance and not as a charity. For this reason, pupils are forbidden to receive any aid from visitors. They are trained to become self-supporting, self-respecting members of society.

The product of the pupils is offered for sale from time to time.



Armless Men Working in the Glass Mosaic Room. Specially Cleansed Clamps Are Used to Take the Place of Missing Hands. Copyright, 1914, by the Star Company. Great Britain Rights Reserved.